



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
FIRES BULLETIN
BUILDING 652 SHERIDAN HALL
FORT SILL, OK 73503-5000

AFVI-EP

19 January 2016

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Fires Bulletin Guidance on Article Submissions

1. Writing for a news publication is unlike writing a memo, OPORDER, newsletter, or anything else meant for internal distribution. Writing for a news publication requires that stories meet exact Department of Defense standards for relevance, timeliness, and readability.

2. To meet these standards, a few ideas must be kept firmly in mind. The following guidance should prove useful in producing the kind of media the public will want to read.

a. General Guidance

(1) OPSEC must be observed at all times

(2) Ask yourself if the topic is newsworthy. An org day, Saint Barbaras Day Ball, or PT test is something every unit has or does and therefore is not news, unless there is something unique to the event. If it has elements of newsworthiness, then it is perfect for the newspaper.

(a) **Elements of newsworthiness:**

(a) **Timeliness:** Freshness matters; it's the *new* in *news*.

(b) **Conflict/Crisis/Catastrophe:** Coverage downrange, or Soldiers helping disaster victims.

(c) **Impact:** New Army standards change how Soldiers perform duties.

(d) **Visibility:** Soldier wins Army-level award.

(e) **Proximity:** Coverage of what's happening on post or surrounding area.

(f) **Bizarreness or shock-value:** 60 year old Soldier scores over 300 on PT test.

(3) Consider your audience. Most of them are not experts in the area you are writing about. You must write so they can understand what you are saying. That means no acronyms until you have already spelled out what it stands for.

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- (4) The average American reads on an 8th grade level. It is good practice to explain the significance of anything a child would not understand. Assume the worst of your audience. Strive to educate and inform.
- (5) Include pictures. People are much more likely to read a story with pictures. Including both horizontal and vertical photos is recommended.
- (6) Associated Press style conventions are the industry standard for news media. Standardization allows you to pick up a magazine anywhere in the country and to still be able to understand it clearly. For military personnel, this means adjusting how you write. The biggest ideological hurdle you are bound to encounter is with names and ranks. The following is the only standard that matters when writing anything intended for the public:

Enlisted Ranks

PVT – Pvt.
PV2 – Pvt.
PFC – Pfc.
SPC – Spc.
CPL – Cpl.
SGT – Sgt.
SSG – Staff Sgt.
SFC – Sgt. 1st Class
MSG – Master Sgt.
1SG – 1st Sgt.
SGM – Sgt. Maj.
CSM – Command Sgt. Maj.
SMA – Sgt. Maj. of the Army

Commissioned Ranks

2LT – 2nd Lt.
1LT – 1st Lt.
CPT – Capt.
MAJ – Maj.
LTC – Lt. Col.
COL – Col.
BG – Brig. Gen.
MG – Maj. Gen.
LTG – Lt. Gen.
GEN – Gen.

- b. In regards to individuals names, always give rank and full name on first reference. Afterward, it is last name only, up-to-and-including the president. This is not disrespectful, but the standard expected to be followed.

- c. Unit names should be used as follows:

First Reference

- 1st Battalion, 14th Field Artillery Regiment
- Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 14th Field Artillery Regiment
- A Battery, 1st Battalion, 14th Field Artillery Regiment

Afterward

- 1-14th FAR
- HHB, 1-14th FAR
- A/1-14th FAR

- d. Types of Stories.

- (1) News is a type of story that is a staple of the news industry, must be written quickly, and must be absolutely accurate. To write a news story, the following elements are essential:
 - (a) There are no opinions in news stories, just facts. There is no place for the writer's perspective or interpretation. All information, all quotes, anything that is not common knowledge (e.g. "the sky is blue") must be attributed to a source.
 - (b) The first two paragraphs should include the "5 Ws": who, what, where, when, and why.
 - (c) The first paragraph is called the lead. It should be kept between 20-30 words and immediately state the most important facts.
 - (d) The second paragraph is meant to fill out any of the 5 Ws that were missed in the first paragraph, and to segue into the body of the article.
 - (e) The body should be arranged like an inverted pyramid, top-loaded with the most important information first, and the rest coming in descending order of importance. Think of it this way: if your story needed to be shortened, the best way would be to eliminate paragraphs, starting with the last.
 - (f) There is no real conclusion to a news story. Remember: just the facts. Let your readers decide what is important.
 - (2) Features are a type of story that is not breaking news, but provides a more in depth look at a subject. It is an attempt to engage the reader, often portrays a thoughtful perspective, and follows a more traditional beginning-middle-end narrative structure. This type of story has a point, is engrossing, and is often lengthier than a news story. The ending is very important in a feature story. It must neatly wrap up the story and bring it to a clear, powerful conclusion.
 - (3) Editorials are basic opinion pieces and should be written by a trusted and reliable source. This type of article is inappropriate to be written by anyone not a subject matter expert in the respective field. This kind of article is usually difficult to have published.
 - (4) Columns are a recurring piece that closely resembles an editorial, but has an emphasis on facts. Hard facts are necessary to maintain the trust of the public, as columnists are subjected to sustained scrutiny. This type of article is exceedingly difficult to have published, unless you are the post commander.
3. The Fires Bulletin staff reserves the right to edit an article and put it in the magazine's style and format.

A comprehensive biography, highlighting experience, education and training relevant to the article's subject and credentialing the author as the writer of the article is also required. Include an e-mail, mailing addresses and phone number.

4. **Sending the article:** E-mail to the editor, *Fires*, at usarmy.sill.fcoe.mbx.fires-bulletin-mailbox@mail.mil; or mail to BLDG 652, Room 110, Hamilton Road, Fort Sill, OK 73503. For more information, or general questions call: (580) 442-1090/5121/6806.

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5. Point of contacts for this memorandum are Marie Berberea 580-442-1090, Rick Paape 580-442-6806, or Monica Wood 580-442-5121.

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Editor

Fires Bulletin